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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving active and critical listening skills for elementary age students. The targeted population consists of middle school children located near a large midwestern city. The problems of poor listening skills are documented through data revealing the need for attending interventions that have been put in place. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students reported a lack of skills in active and critical listening. A review of curricula and literature revealed that teachers do not receive adequate staff development related to teaching listening. Students do not receive direct instruction on the components of effective listening. Inability to listen has been revealed through information received from the faculty. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem settings, resulted in the selection of four major categories of intervention. The four categories include active listening, critical listening, note-taking, and applications for life transfer. Post intervention data indicated an increase in students' listening skills and behaviors based on assessment activities. Contains 28 references, 8 figures, and 2 tables of data. Appendixes contain questionnaires, interview sheets, checklists, dictation sentences, stories with questions, and listening rules and strategies. (Author/SR)

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IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF ACTIVE LISTENING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving active and critical listening skills for elementary age students. The targeted population consists of middle school children, located near a large midwestern city. The problems of poor listening skills are documented through data revealing the need for attending interventions that have been put in place.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students reported a lack of skills in active and critical listening. A review of curricula and literature revealed that teachers do not receive adequate staff development related to teaching listening. Students do not receive direct instruction on the components of effective listening. Inability to listen has been revealed through information received from the faculty.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem settings, resulted in the selection of four major categories of intervention. The four categories include active listening, critical listening, note-taking, and applications for life transfer.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in students' listening skills and behaviors based on assessment activities.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Poor listening skills are causing academic problems within intermediate and junior high classrooms as evidenced by poor test performance, anecdotal records, and teacher observation, and exacerbated by a lack of instruction in listening.

Immediate Problem Context

One junior high and three intermediate teachers at two school settings researched listening skills within their classrooms. One junior high and two intermediate teachers are at site A while one intermediate teacher is at site B.

Site A

Site A is one of seven elementary schools located within the district. Site A was originally built at another location in 1921, and moved to its present location in 1940. An addition was built in 1962. Site A contains grades kindergarten through eighth. Enrollment is 396 students, which is considered average in size according to the State School Report Card for 1997. Individual average class sizes again per the State School Report Card for 1997 are as follows: 30 students in kindergarten, (which includes a morning and afternoon session), 17.5 students in grade 1, 17.0 students in grade 3, 21.5 students in grade 6, and 20.0 students in grade 8. The racial background for Site A is as follows: 88.9% White, 10.9% Hispanic, and 0.3% Asian/Pacific Islander. Five point three percent of all students are low-income and 3.5% are Limited English Proficient (LEP). Ninety-six percent of the students attend school every day and there is 13.4% student mobility. Site A has 0.0% chronic truancy.

The staff of the school consists of 19 classroom teachers, two resource teachers, one self-contained special education teacher (who is assisted by a certified teacher-aide), one social worker, one speech and language specialist, one psychologist, two English as a second language teachers, two gifted teachers, one music teacher, one band instructor, one art teacher, one librarian (with a non-certified aide), two gym teachers, one secretary, five part-time lunchtime supervisors, two

full-time custodians and one part-time custodian, and one principal. All of the staff members are White. Out of 46 staff members, seven are male (School Report Card, 1997).

It is the mission of the school, together with the students, staff, parents, and community, to create a positive, and caring learning environment. The school community is dedicated to the idea that every student should have the best opportunity to realize his/her full potential as a productive, socially responsible citizen and is able to be successful in meeting life's challenges in a culturally diverse society.

Extra-curricular activities include band, choir, and student council. After school activities that the students can participate in include after-school gym, computer club, cheerleading, basketball team, volleyball team, and track and field team.

Site A offers several improvement programs that continually strive to meet the varied needs of each and every student. A variety of reading incentive programs are used to encourage students to read as much as possible. The following is an overview of some ongoing activities used at various grade levels: Book-It, Accelerated Reading, Barrel of Books Club, Mystery Readers, and Super Readers. In addition, Express to Success, Bridge to Success, Power Hour, and Math Lab are all tutorial programs to help "at-risk" students academically.

Power Writing techniques are used by faculty members to create writing workshops in their classrooms. Letters, stories, and poems are written and published by the students for their parents using a "professional" book format.

Site A's district is comprised of 3,101 students. The racial/ethnic breakdown is as follows: 91.3% White, 7.4% Hispanic, and 1.2% Asian/Pacific Islander. Low-income student percentage is 6.8%. Limited English Proficient students make up 6.6% of the total students in the District. The attendance rate is 95.7%, student mobility is 12.9%, chronic truancy is rated at 0.1%, and the number of chronic truants is four. Average class sizes in the district are: kindergarten is 22.0, grade 1 is 20.7, grade 3 is 22.2, grade 6 is 26.8, and grade 8 is 25.8. The district consists of 175 teachers; 83.4% female and 16.6% male. Racial/ethnic background consists of 98.9% White, 0.6% Hispanic, 0.6% Asian/ Pacific Islander. The average teaching experience is 17.9 years. Sixty-two point nine percent of teachers have bachelor's degrees, and 37.1% have master's degrees and above. The pupil-teacher ratio is 20.7:1, while the pupil-administration ratio is

238.5:1. The average teacher salary for the district is $42,617, and the average administrator salary is $62,129. The operating expenditure per pupil is $5,527. Educational expenditure is $13,312,464. Operations & maintenance expenses are $1,775,279. Transportation expenses are $669,583 (School Report Card, 1997).

Site B

Site B is one of eight elementary schools located within the district. Site B is 75 years old and has recently undergone remodeling. It housed both administration and K-5 classrooms until 1990. In 1990, due to the need for more classroom space because of increase in enrollment, the administration office moved from the building. Site B is located across the street from a park, an art museum, a rock museum, a library, and is two blocks from a university.

Site B is in a Unit District and is a full inclusion, non-graded, K-5 school. The total enrollment is 491 students with 90.4% White, 3.9% Hispanic, 3.5% Black, and 2.2% Asian/Pacific Islander. Site B has four rooms of each grade level except third and fifth grades, which have three rooms. Individual average class sizes are as follows: 24.0 in Kindergarten, 22.7 in Grade 1, and 20.3 in Grade 3. Site B's attendance rate for the 1995-96 school year was 95.8%. The student mobility was 1.8% and chronic truancy was 0% (School Report Card, 1997).

Two percent of the students in Site B are from low-income and two percent are Limited-English-Proficient. The two percent who are low-income come from a low-income apartment complex located four blocks from the site. Site B offers a free lunch program.

The staff of the school consists of 20 classroom teachers, two resource teachers, one speech teacher, one reading specialist, one reading aide, one librarian, one library aide, one computer aide, five inclusion aides, one full-time and one part-time secretary, a health aide, and one principal. The following teachers are shared between schools: two gym teachers, one music teacher, one art teacher, one band teacher, one orchestra teacher, three Spanish teachers, one social worker, one school psychologist, one occupational therapist, one physical therapist, one gifted teacher, and one English as a Second Language teacher. The staff is 100% White and out of the 50 staff members, four are males (School Report Card, 1997).

Site B students have 50 minutes of art, an hour of gym, an hour of music, and 80 minutes

of Spanish each week. Spanish classes begin in the second grade and continue through the fifth grade. Students in the fourth and fifth grades have the opportunity to participate in band or orchestra. The music lessons are for thirty minutes each week. Site B offers a pull-out gifted program in language arts and math for fourth and fifth grades and in-class support from the gifted teacher for third grade.

Site B has a Learning Resource Center (LRC) and Technology Resource Center (TRC). The TRC is equipped with eight computers and one teacher computer. Most students work in the TRC 45 minutes a week or on a biweekly schedule. The lessons in the TRC are prepared by the classroom teacher with the help of a computer aide.

Site B offers a before and after school recreation center with hours from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Twice a week, the Site provides an after-school Senior tutoring program in the third, fourth, and fifth grades. Students have the opportunity to participate in several after-school programs such as: choir for fourth and fifth grades, art club for fifth grade, chess club for all grades, intramural sports for fourth and fifth grades, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Brownies.

Site B's areas of improvement that are planned for the 1997-1998 year include: improving second grade reading through alignment of curriculum with local assessment, achievement of rhythm dictation on third and fifth grade local music assessment, and increasing communication among the computer aide, Learning Resource Center director, and classroom teachers.

The district includes eight elementary schools (Grades K-5), three middle schools (Grades 6-8) and one high school. Site B's district is comprised of 6,503 students with 88.8% White, 5.8% Asian/Pacific, 4.4% Hispanic, 1.1% Black and .1% Native American. In the district, 2.4% of the students are low-income and 2.0% are limited English proficient students. Average class sizes in the District are 21.1 in Kindergarten, 22.7 in Grade 1, and 21.3 in Grade 3. The attendance rate is 95.4%, student mobility rate is 8.9%, chronic truancy is 0.4% and the number of chronic truants is 23.

The district consists of 427 teachers. The racial/ethnic background of the teachers is 99.3% White, 0.2% Black, 0.2% Hispanic, and 0.2% Asian/Pacific Islander. The gender of the staff is 72.9% female and 27.1% male. The average teaching experience is 14.4 years. Teachers with bachelor's degrees account for 40.3% and teachers with master's degrees and above is 59.7%.

The average teacher salary for the district in 1996-97 was $48,991, while the average administrator salary was $78,988. The operating expenditure per pupil was $7,753 (School Report Card,1997).

Early in 1996, the Board of Education authorized the implementation of a strategic planning process to develop a plan for the district to follow into the next century. The committee consisted of over one hundred members of the community, including parents, representatives of civic and service organizations, governmental agencies, teachers, and administrators. The committee developed goals and objectives for seven key areas. The seven areas included: community relations, facilities, finance, instruction, personnel, pupil services, and technology.

The Surrounding Community

Site A

Site A is located in a medium-sized suburb of a large Midwestern city. The population of this suburb is 27,600. Ten point two percent of all persons are foreign born. The number of persons aged 5 to 17 years who speak a language other than English at home is 930. The number of persons 18 or older who speak a language other than English at home is 3,795. Family households with children under 18 years of age is 7,370. Married-couple family households with children under the age of 18 is 6,117. Female householders with no husband present is 954. Twenty-six thousand, nine hundred six people are White, 1,305 are Hispanic, 321 are Other Race, 312 are Asian/Pacific Islander, 50 are American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut, and 11 are Black. There is a total of 18,044 persons who are 25 and older. Of these, 70.1% have at least a high school degree, and 7.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Sixty-six point six percent of the population is in the labor force. Of this amount, 56.7% is Female. Fifty-nine point six percent of women who are working have children under six years of age. The median income for households is $37,449. Two point six percent of all families are below poverty level. Eighty-two point nine percent of all housing units are owner-occupied. Seventeen point one percent of all housing units are renter-occupied. The median value of the homes is $89,600 (Chamber of Commerce Census, 1990).

The surrounding community of Site A consists of a city hall, one police station, two fire departments, a public works department, one public library, and one medical center. The community offers a wide range of activities for all ages, such as a preschool, a senior citizen

center, and many programs that are initiated by the park district and other outside organizations. The community of Site A has 14 parks and one water park. Site A is a community located within walking distance of the following: public library, churches, restaurants, local businesses, grocery stores, water park, and another school belonging to the district. The students of this school are incorporated into Site A for seventh and eighth grade.

Site B

Site B is located in a medium-sized suburb of a large Midwestern city. The population of this suburb is 42, 029. There are 21,719 females and 20,310 males. The community is made up of 40,307 White, 1,278 Asian/Pacific Islander, 175 Black, 34 American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut, and 235 other. The educational attainment of persons 25 and over (28,449) is 4% less than 9th grade, 8% 9th to 12th grade, no diploma, 24% high school diploma, 20% some college, 6% associate's degree, 24% bachelor's degree and 15% graduate degree. Occupations for employed persons 16 years and over (22,486) include: administrative support occupations, including clerical accounting for 20%; executive, administrative, and managerial occupations 19%; professional specialty occupations 18%; sales 14%; and other occupations comprise 29% of the total work force. The median household income is $49,611. One percent of the population lives below the poverty level (Chamber of Commerce Census, 1990).

The community housing includes a mix of attractive middle-class homes and mansions. Homes designed by architects Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies Van der Rohe and Walter Burley Griffin are all located within the city. The housing units in the community consists of 12,657 owner occupied and 2,478 renter occupied. The median value of a home is $135,600 and the median contract rent is $561 (Chamber of Commerce Census, 1990).

The surrounding community of Site B consists of a city hall, one police station, four fire stations, one hospital, one junior college and one four-year private college. The community has an historical museum, art museum, contemporary art museum, a plant conservatory, a war memorial, and a public library. The community has its own symphony and children's theater.

The park district is responsible for 29 parks. The park offers a full schedule of year-round activities for all ages from tennis, golf, swimming, art, and educational classes. A wide variety of special programs for seniors are conducted year-round. The park district runs a community owned

fitness facility offering tennis courts, an indoor pool, a track, a weight room, and courts for racquetball, handball, and basketball. The community also has a YMCA that offers year-round activities.

National Context of the Problem

The importance of developing good listening skills in the elementary classroom cannot be understated (Funk & Funk, 1989). The problems associated with poor listening skills may result in a lack of understanding of lesson content and/or a reduction of learning (Barmor, 1990). According to Huntsaker, (1990), 80% of what we learn comes from listening, but adults operate at only a 25% listening efficiency (Brent & Anderson, 1993; Jalongo, 1996). Teachers have double standards when it comes to listening. Undivided attention of all students is expected 50% of the time, yet adults do not listen more than 25% of the time (Wolvin & Coakley 1988; Jalongo, 1996). According to Funk & Funk (p. 662), students pattern their listening techniques after their adult role models who do not take the time to listen carefully. Many times students do not know the distinction between listening to and listening for a specific purpose. Listening is more than just learning. Students need to listen better, not more.

Poor listening skills have developed for a number of reasons. Some teachers don't approach it as a part of their curriculum, others think it's a natural process, while others feel listening cannot be taught or evaluated (p. 660). Since many teachers have not experienced instruction in teaching listening skills, they may feel inadequate to try. Once teachers acquire the knowledge necessary to make students aware of strategies and techniques that are essential for critical listening, students will become better learners, and therefore, better students overall.

Before books and printing, the primary element in acquiring knowledge was listening (Armstrong, 1995). Most of what people learn comes from oral interaction. Studies suggest that young children who listen to stories accompanied with oral follow-up activities make greater gains in vocabulary and reading comprehension (Russell, 1979). Russell also suggests that the importance of instruction in listening increases in the intermediate grades because more attention is paid to learning in the content areas. Children who are poor listeners become poor scholars; they have difficulty in all curricula areas because they are unable to use listening skills to learn.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

There are many definitions for listening. According to Webster's Dictionary to listen means to: 1. pay attention to sound; perceive with the ear, and 2. to hear with thoughtful attention; consider seriously. The researchers believe more is involved with listening. Listening is active work that includes thinking, feeling, processing information, making pertinent comments, and asking relevant questions. To listen is to process what is heard and to respond to what is heard (Russell, 1979). According to Devine (1978), a simple definition that encompasses all of what listening is, has yet to emerge. It is difficult to separate skills specific to listening from the skills specific to thinking.

According to a teacher listening skills questionnaire (Appendix A) given to thirty-five teachers from grades K-8, the following definition of what is a "good listener" has been compiled. A good listener is able to: (a) hear and repeat what is being said, (b) focus attention on speaker (eye contact), (c) follow directions, (d) comprehend and respond appropriately, (e) distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, (f) paraphrase and/or summarize information, and (g) judge what is being spoken. As research suggests, a simple definition for listening is difficult to create (Devine, 1978).

A questionnaire was given to seventy-two students, (Appendix B). Responses to the question, "What is a good listener?" were collected and resulted in the information as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Listening Definitions

Definitions	Number of Times Recorded
Pays Attention	14
Looks at the speaker and nods their head that they understand	11
Doesn't talk or interrupt	9
Used "Listen" as part of their definition	8
Good grades; Good in school*	7
Takes time to listen to others	7
Follows directions	6
Hears very well	4
Not distracted; Doesn't play with toys	3
Understands/Remembers what is said	2
Asks Questions	1

*Note. This comment was not checked by any students questioned at Site B. Site B is a non-graded district.

Thirty-five teachers were surveyed, (Appendix A). Figure 1 shows responses concerning evaluation of student listening skills.

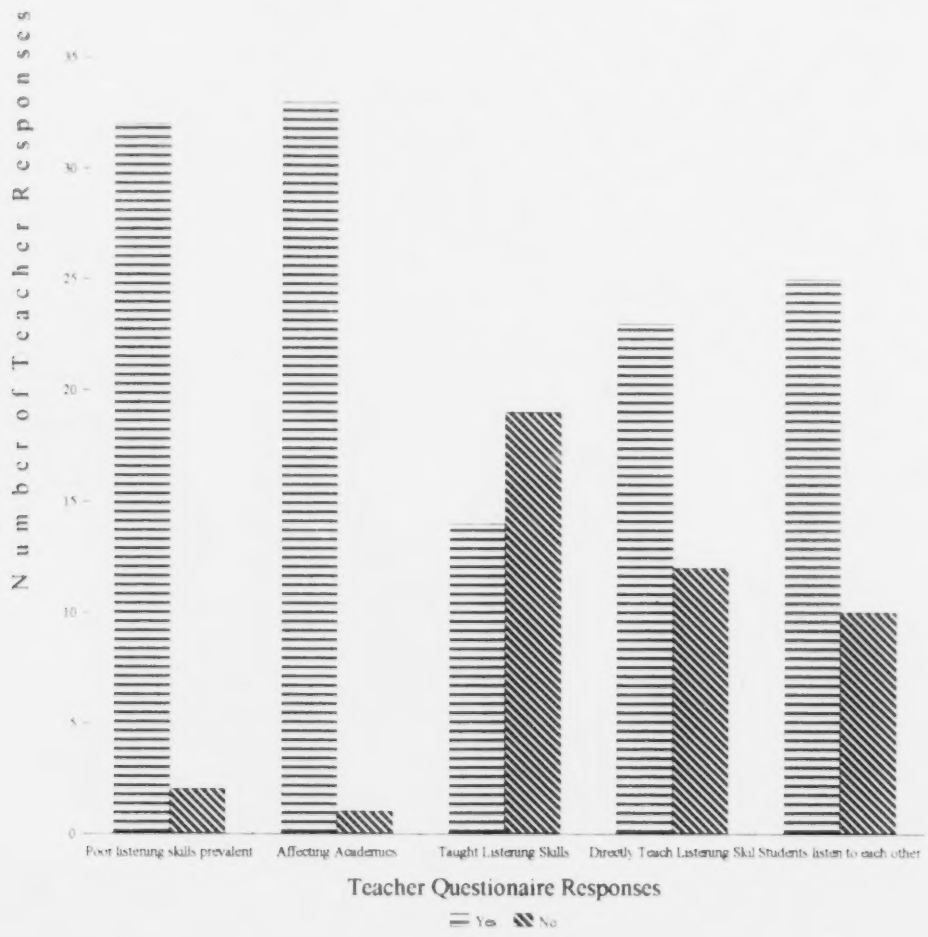

Figure 1. Teacher survey regarding aspects of listening.

A majority of teachers indicated that poor listening skills were prevalent and negatively affected academics with well over one-half indicating their students don't listen to each other. Less than half of the teachers were taught direct listening skills during their educational training or during their professional careers. About two-thirds directly teach their students skills relating to how to listen.

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Seventy-two students were surveyed, (see Appendix B), and Figure 2 shows responses concerning self-evaluation and reflections on their listening skills and behaviors.

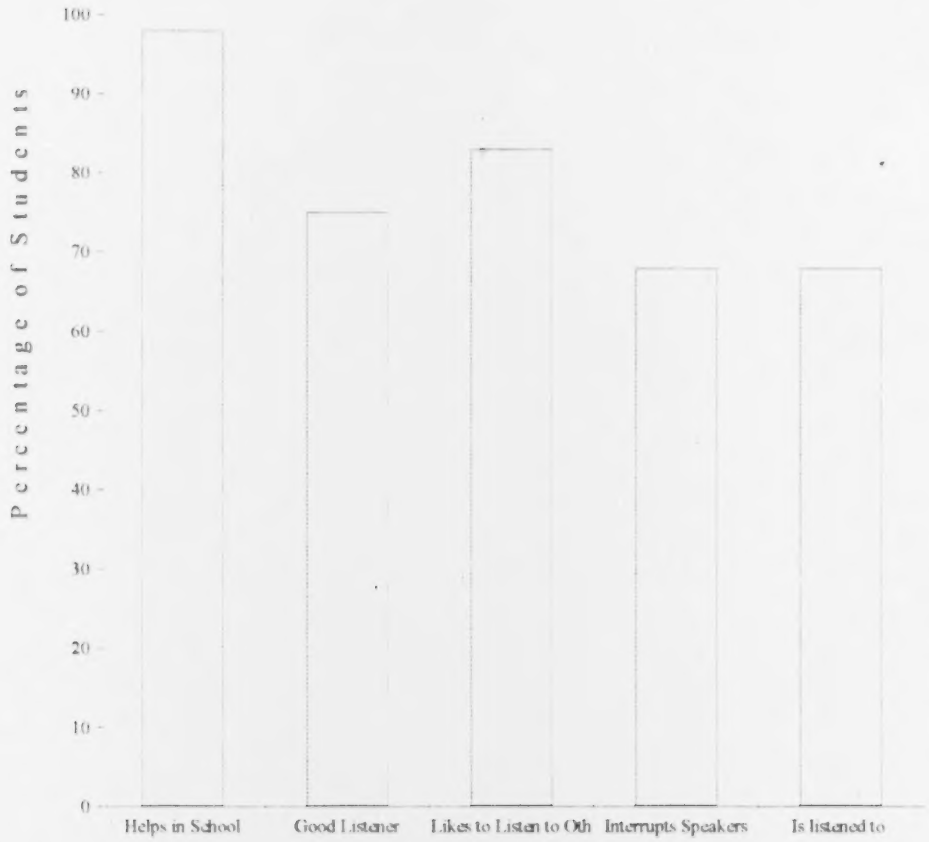

Figure 2. Students' self perceptions of their listening behaviors.

Of 72 students, 98% said that listening helps them in school, 75% felt they were good listeners, 83% like to listen to other people, 68% said they interrupt the speaker, 68% felt that people listen to them.

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Upon examining the results from both surveys, Figures 1 and 2, students perceptions of their own listening skills contradicts observations made by teachers. Ninety-eight percent of the students believe listening helps them in school, while 96% of teachers feel that poor listening skills are affecting academics.

Seventy-two students were asked the question "Where do you listen better?" (a) home, (b) school, or (c) both (See Appendix B). Twenty percent felt they listen better at home, 35 percent felt they listen better at school, and 45 percent felt they listen just as well at home as at school.

The teacher/researchers showed students a 20 minute video entitled, "Amazing World of Animals." After watching the video, the students were given questions (see Appendix C), to answer based on the video. The pie graph indicates the results.

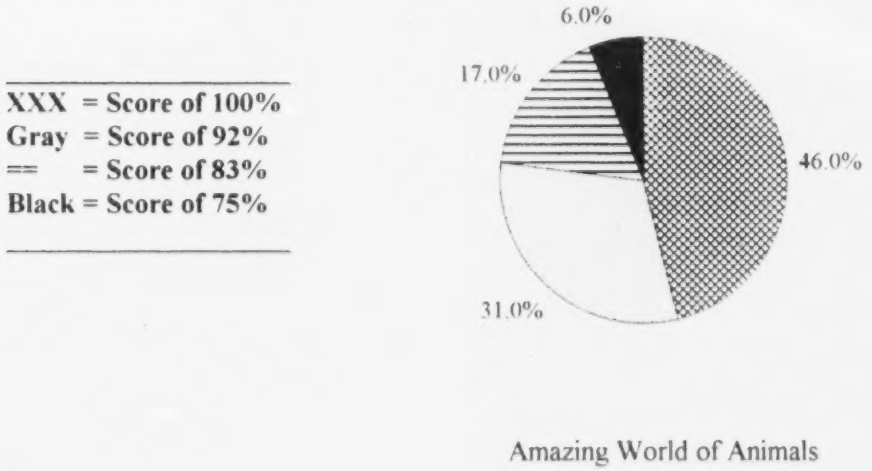

Figure 3. Listening Assessment.

Video and questions/visual recall. Out of 72 students, 46% received a score of 100%, 31% received a score of 92%, 17% received a score of 83%, and 6% received a score 75%.

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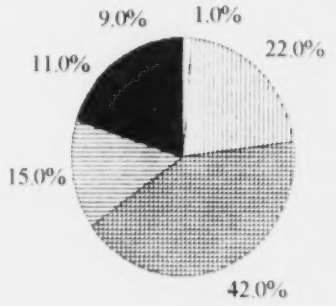
Teachers spend a lot of time expecting students to listen to them but not enough time is spent having students listen to each other. Teacher/researchers presented students a listening activity entitled "Peer Interview" (Appendix D), in which students were instructed to ask each other a total of 12 questions, and were further instructed not to repeat any questions or responses. Students were given a time limit of ten minutes per interview. Teachers observed listening skill behaviors and reported them on an observational checklist (Appendix E). The results of the checklist showed that observers were not able to accurately evaluate behaviors as stated on the observational checklist.

The teacher/researchers read a short story to the students and were told they would have to answer questions about it afterwards (Appendix F). The pie graph indicates the results based on the "Were You Listening?" Activity #1.

White = 100%
||||||||||||| = 80%
= 60%
===== = 40%
Black = 20%
Gray = 0%



Were You Listening Activity #1

Figure 3. Listening assessment.

Whole story and questions. Of 72 students, 1 achieved a score of 100%, 16 a 80%, 30 a 60%, 11 a 40%, 8 a 20%, and 6 achieved a score of 0%. These figures suggest students lack listening skills presented with activities that required having to listen over a long period of time, and without benefit of visual aids or prior knowledge being assessed.

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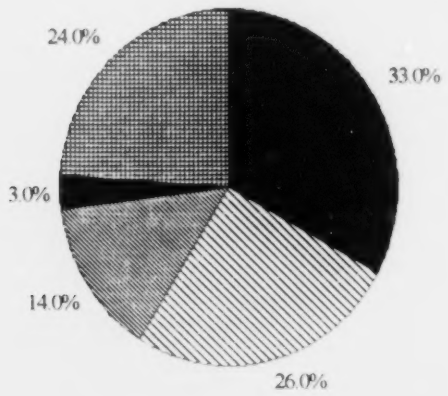
Students were given sentence dictation (Appendix G). Sentences were dictated by teachers to students one time only with no repetitions or clarifications. Teacher/researchers based the results on the first two dictated spelling sentences consisting of approximately 10 words in each sentence. Figure 4 represents the results.



Spelling Dictation Results

Site A Grading Scale

Gray	= A (93-100%)
Light \\\	= B (85-92%)
Dark \\\	= C (76-84%)
Black	= D (70-75%)
++++	= F (69% - Below)

Figure 4. Sentence dictation recall

Based on Site A's grade scale, Figure 4 reveals that out of 72 students, 33% received a grade of A, 26% received a grade of B, 14% received a grade of C, 3% received a grade of D, and 24% received a grade of F.

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Out of 72 students, only .01% received an A or B for the "Were You Listening" Story? (see Appendix F), while 59% received an A or B for the Spelling Dictation Sentence (see Appendix G), and 77% received an A or B for the "Amazing World of Animals" Video (see Appendix C). These figures suggest that students' performances are better when a visual aid is included as part of a listening activity. Students in our society are accustomed to participating in visual activities that are entertaining, such as television, computers and video games. One out of seven kids who play video and computer games play at least an hour and a half a day. Seven percent play three or more hours a day (Time, Inc., 1999).

Recall was more immediate during the Spelling Dictation lesson which might account for the higher percentage of good grades compared to the "Were You Listening?" story. Students could not respond immediately and were required to "Just listen" while the five minute story was read to the class. Students appeared to have more difficulty with a listening activity that did not include a visual aid and when the recall time was not immediate.

Probable Causes

On type of listening is active listening. Active listening is being in tune with the speaker, giving full attention to the messages being received, and actively processing the information by asking questions relevant to the topic. The focus in active listening is focusing on the speaker and understanding the message (Wolff, Marsnik, Tacey, & Nichols, 1983, Brent & Anderson, 1993).

Critical listening involves not only understanding the message but responding and evaluating what is being said. Some ways of evaluating and responding to what is being said are making predictions, formulating questions, identifying, and summarizing main

ideas, and creating personal opinions on the topic. If a person is listening critically, he/she will react emotionally to the message being given. Some of the emotions that may be displayed are anger, fear, or pleasure (Russell, 1979). Listening effectively should involve the total person--mentally, physically, and emotionally.

The problem of students' lack of listening skills has many causes. Listening is far down the American public school's list of priorities (Jalongo, 1995). The factors that cause the lack of students' ability to listen are attributed to two partners of the educational process, teachers and students. Teachers may be the most important cause of this problem. The teacher/researchers find from their own experiences that most listening instruction is given in general terms, such as, "Listen carefully," "Listen everyone," "Now you need to listen, this is important," etc. These directions assume that students know what it means to listen, when in fact, listening skills are rarely taught directly. Many teachers believe that listening develops naturally so they need not attempt to teach listening. Presuming that listening is an innate ability can prevent teachers from attempting to teach listening skills. "Just as we know no one had to teach us how to breathe, many of us believe that no one has to teach us to listen." Additionally, the authors suggest that listening is not automatic. It is a mental process that demands a decision to listen (Wolff, Marsnik, Tacey, and Nichols, 1983).

Teachers are concerned more with completing their existing curriculum than adding another demand. Teachers are often frustrated with the lack of listening skills, but find it hard to fit instruction into an already full day (Brent and Anderson, 1993). One reason teachers don't consider including listening instruction is due to time constraints.

Many teachers believe they have to teach listening skills as a separate entity, instead of incorporating these skills into the content areas. According to Russell (1979), to

teach listening out of the content area is unnecessary and unwise. Listening is the major way humans learn, listening plays a big part in all curriculum areas. According to Sister Geigle, (1966), it is through listening that we receive the major portion of our information, opinions, attitudes, and enjoyment.

Students cannot be expected to learn listening skills until teachers are comfortable and knowledgeable enough to teach those skills. According to Funk & Funk (1989), teachers feel inadequate to teach listening to their students because many have received little, if any instruction themselves. Most discussions on developing listening skills show how-to activities and ignore focused thinking, structured questioning, predictions, modeling, guided feedback, and self monitoring (Choate & Rakes, 1987).

Teachers have had problems regarding active listening within their classroom throughout the years. In the first major study dealing with listening, Rankin (1926), recorded twenty-one adults at fifteen minute intervals in their use of the four language arts: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The research study showed listening is used more than talking, three times as much as reading, and four times as much as writing (Rankin, 1926). Fifty-seven and one-half percent of time spent in the elementary school was spent in listening (Geigle, 1966).

How can teachers expect students to accomplish something most adults are not capable of doing? According to Hunsaker (1990), while 80% of what one knows is acquired through listening, most adults listen at no better than 25% listening efficiency. Most adult listeners are preoccupied, distracted, and forgetful nearly 75% of the time. Teachers expect students to listen in school for up to 50% of the time (Jalongo, 1995).

According to Jalongo (1996), adults sometimes have a double standard where their own listening behavior and children's listening behavior are concerned. Children learn

more from our actions. If teachers expect undivided attention from their students, they must give undivided attention to them. Teachers frequently cut their students short for a variety of reasons. Time, excessive amount of content to be covered, and off-topic or inappropriate responses are all factors that cause teachers to be non-listeners themselves (Funk & Funk, 1989).

In addition to non-listening, the teacher/researchers believe there are many distractions that hinder the students' ability to listen and concentrate. Teachers don't always filter out sensory input in order to create a listening environment (Jalongo, 1996). The physical environment is the first distraction that needs to be addressed. It is difficult to concentrate if the room is too cold or too warm. Disorganization in the classroom can also be a contributing factor. Materials frequently are not put in easily accessible places and routines are not always established clearly (Brent and Anderson,1993).

The teacher/researchers have found that teachers are not always aware of the students' needs. One example would be a student who needs glasses being placed away from the teacher and the board. This student, especially if he/she is a visual learner, will have a difficult time concentrating and listening. Another example of a student's physical needs found in one teacher/researcher's classroom, was a student needing to use the bathroom on a more than regular basis. In addition, teachers are not always aware of what is going on in the students' home environment, which affects their ability to listen (Jalongo, 1996).

Researchers find teachers may not be aware of the students' different learning styles. Not all students learn best by auditory instruction. Too much emphasis is placed on that one modality of learning. This creates a difficult situation for the classroom teacher who has to keep every listening lesson motivating and interesting (Funk & Funk, 1989).

Children can acquire poor listening habits if classroom activities do not require processing and responding and if the material has no relevance to them. Some classroom activities, like long lectures, can mesmerize students into nonlistening. Gifted students may learn not to listen because they already know the material being presented (Russell & Russell, 1959).

Teachers' efforts to make lessons more effective must be joined by an effort on the part of the students to become better learners. Students don't know how to listen effectively. The reasons may be that they don't have the discipline necessary to be good listeners, they can't ignore distractions that are present, equate listening to hearing, or believe they can listen to two things at once, are thinking about what they are going to say and not listening to the speaker, and are not prepared to listen actively. They are not aware of the importance of listening in everything they do and will do in the future. Students have not acquired the higher level listening skills necessary to enable them to anticipate, summarize, paraphrase, and question the material being presented (Armstrong, 1997-98).

Consequences for poor listening skills can be great. Listening is a major part of communication. Lack of listening skills can create communication problems with others. Careless listening can cause friendships and marriages to end, and can also cost time and money. Caring listening can result in people feeling better about themselves, becoming less defensive, and being more open to new experiences (Wolf, Marsnik, Tacey, Nichols, 1983).

Teachers often complain that children do not listen or follow directions. This could be caused by the fact that teachers don't give clear and precise directions. Often times teachers expect students to read the teacher's mind because the directions given are brief

and vague. For instance, "Clear your desk," may mean something different to the student than the teacher. Getting things done correctly means a precise communication that makes sense to the children and to the teacher (Lyden, 1998). This may be an issue teachers are not focusing on in their communication with students.

An important part of listening is good communication. Teachers don't always communicate the purpose of the lesson to their students. They don't point out ahead of time what is important in the lesson. Teachers don't always set the stage for the new learning by activating the students' prior knowledge of the subject. Students are not always motivated to listen, if a real reason is not given. Children are more motivated to listen when they know that they will be expected to perform a specific and interesting task (Jalongo, 1995).

Communication includes relating subject matter to the students' lives. Students are not always involved in their own education. Decisions on content, assessment, and format are usually decided by teacher input only. The researchers have found that some teachers do not like to give up control of the classroom and may be afraid to allow students some control of what happens in the class. Students may become bored and distracted if the lesson has no relevance to them (Jalongo, 1995, Funk and Funk, 1989).

In conclusion, the problem of students' lack of listening skills has many causes. Teachers and students play a major role in solving this problem. Teachers need to exhibit good listening behaviors and to be attentive to the students whenever possible. Students need to become better learners. According to Armstrong (1997-98), learning to listen is a good place to start. If teachers expect children to become good listeners, they need to do more than worry, complain, or demand. They need to teach their students to become active listeners (Jalongo, 1995).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The definition of listening, according to some communication experts, is a reaction to whatever stimulates our sense of hearing; we hear a signal, convert it to a message, relate it to our past experiences, and say that we comprehend it through our ability to listen. Listening is an active process involving hearing, understanding, integrating, and responding. That is, you hear words, give them meaning, determine how you feel about them, and decide how you will respond to them: all in a matter of seconds (Wolff, Marsnik, Tacey, and Nichols, 1983).

According to Wolff, Marsnik, Tacey & Nichols (1983), listening has been assigned the orphan role in our educational system. The assumption is often made that because children arrive at school speaking and listening, these skills need not be formally taught, but with the current emphasis on reading and writing, it is a serious error to ignore the direct teaching of listening. Listening is an important skill in a society heavily reliant on information transfer (Winn, 1998). Listening, the most used communication skill, only receives eight percent of instructional time. At least 75 % of our daily communication is oral and requires us to be articulate speakers and efficient listeners. Listening is a skill required in all content areas for students to achieve success during their academic years and beyond. According to Fausti & McGlone (1972), children learn to speak, read, and write by listening to others. Listening is the most frequently used communication skill, and in many ways, it is the most important. According to Wolff, Marsnik, Tacey, & Nichols (1983), we are experiencing a reawakening in

American schools to the importance of teaching listening for effective oral-aural communication. Finally, the listening orphan is being adopted.

According to Jalongo (1995), teachers and students must work together in order to create solution strategies that will promote active and critical listening. Students and teachers can develop a curriculum founded on experience and need, employing the following steps: collect classroom data on types of listening; categorize them; identify topic and time frame; teach concept directly, using a permanent visual; practice concept throughout the curriculum; review process and important steps using visual; select new topic and start the process again. The researchers believe that effective listening strategies must begin with the teacher. Teachers need to model good listening, be aware of the different learning styles, be conscious of classroom environment, and be aware of any conditions encountered on a day to day basis. Direct and indirect teaching of listening strategies can be incorporated into ongoing lessons and activities by practicing how to listen (Brent & Anderson, 1993).

Research suggests that teachers should model effective listening and practice it daily in order to have students learn to value listening. This does not mean to drop everything and listen to every little comment. Teachers need to listen attentively to students by making listening become a natural process of interaction (Gootman, 1997, Brent & Anderson, 1993). Teachers who model good listening habits get down to the child's eye level, hear the child out, and strive to understand the child's meaning. Class discussions create a grand opportunity for the teacher to model the importance of listening. Sharing and brainstorming ideas and plans teach the students to listen to, learn from, and value each other's contributions (Jalongo, 1996). Another way that teachers model good listening habits in the classroom is by reassuring children that they will be heard. In a group setting, children sometimes become so preoccupied with getting a turn that they stop listening. We can reduce that worry and improve their listening by saying a simple comment like, "Don't worry, everyone will get a turn to share an observation about the guinea pig." Another prime time for teachers to listen is with one-on-one conferences with their students. During these conferences, teachers may listen to individual children as they talk about

their writing or tell about books they have read. Good listening in a conference setting means giving children ample time to express their ideas. Attentive listening should be a part of every teacher's natural interaction with children. By attending carefully to the ideas and plans that children create, teachers model the importance of listening to and valuing each student's contributions. This leads to meaningful expression of ideas and the translation of rich experiences (Brent & Anderson, 1993).

Flexibility and time are major factors in creating a classroom conducive to listening. A listening atmosphere does not happen incidentally. Research shows efforts should be made to get children ready to listen. It may take a few minutes of class time to consistently set the stage for listening, but this is time well spent and positive listening habits and greater comprehension should be expected results (Jalongo, 1996). Another major factor in creating a classroom conducive to listening is attending to physical conditions that may interfere with listening. Some of these conditions include: fatigue, abuse, hunger, illness, bathroom needs or room temperature. In order to attend to students' physical needs, the classroom teacher may have to arrange a health and hearing screening, recommend the child for a free breakfast program (if available), and/or consider the physical room arrangement. Room arrangement may include a quiet corner or a circle time area. Special routines may be established such as using a cleanup song, soft lighting for story time, and/or using visual aids. Classroom atmosphere may be enhanced by providing a variety of listening experiences such as filling a basket with music cassettes, or taking a walk outdoors to listen to winter sounds. Also helpful to a positive listening atmosphere is using procedures that minimize distractions such as directing children to close their eyes and imagine, or putting up a Do Not Disturb sign during read aloud time. The physical condition of the classroom may impact students' listening behaviors (Jalongo, 1996).

In addition to physical conditions, psychological conditions also need to be addressed. Some of these conditions include: mental health, intellectual ability, attention span, ability to focus, language proficiency, interest in the message, perceptions of the speaker, ability to process information at the speaker's rate, and self-esteem as a listener/learner (Garman & Garman, 1992).

In order to attend to students' psychological needs, the classroom teacher may have to refer students to various specialists. Some students may need evaluations and possible services from people such as psychologists, social workers, medical doctors, speech pathologists, English as second language (ESL), and/or special education teachers. Classroom teachers need to be constantly aware of potential problems in listening that may be hindering student success in school.

Teachers should provide a purpose for listening in order to create good listeners. Children should be given a specific purpose for each listening experience and understand what is called for: listening for main ideas, identifying moods, differentiating facts from opinions, selecting descriptive vocabulary or listening for sequence in a story. By providing the students with a purpose for listening, the teacher will be able to make a meaningful evaluation of comprehension. Listening comprehension and retention will increase if teachers provide the students with proper guidance. Teachers may include follow-up activities that are well planned, are implemented immediately after the listening activity, and are a direct extension of the activity. These activities may provide an opportunity to check comprehension, correct inaccurate concepts, and clarify learning. They also allow children to apply their new information immediately (Funk & Funk, 1989).

In order for students to perform effectively, teachers need to give precise and positive directions that tell the students exactly what is expected of them. Another strategy for encouraging listening is through play and humor. Use fanciful techniques to turn learning to listen into a chance to play, a chance to use imagination, and a chance to have fun. Students are more apt to listen better when they are asked to "walk on marshmallow shoes in the hall" rather than being asked to " walk quietly through the hall" or ask kids to reach into their pockets for their "magic mouth-locking keys" (Spann & Faber, 1993).

Listening instruction needs to be taught throughout the school day. Increasing exposure to proper listening skills and habits across the curricula will improve academic performance (Devine, 1978). One way to expose students to proper listening skills and habits is for teachers to be good

models by believing that teaching and learning can occur without excessive teacher talk. Emphasis is placed on learning how to think rather than on collecting information. According to Brown (1991), good questions have more than one answer, encourage deeper thinking, are formulated by the students, and are challenged by the teacher. Subject matter should be related to the students' lives, time should be spent listening to peers as well as the teacher, and the resolution of conflicts can be obtained by listening and talking together.

According to Choate & Rakes (1987), teachers should be specific when selecting strategies for listening, observe students throughout the day, assess their listening skills, and make students aware of good listening behaviors. A teacher who wishes to help students become better listeners should provide experiences with a wide variety of listening situations (Funk & Funk, 1989). The practice of effective listening may be incorporated into different settings. Some of the settings the researchers from Site A and B have used in the past are reading aloud to the class, cooperative groups, writing workshops, book shares, video tapes, computers, and teaching to the multiple intelligences.

There are many methods used to promote children's listening skills. Too much emphasis is being placed on one modality of learning, especially for those children who may not learn best by listening (Carbo, 1983; Carbo, 1986; Dunn and Dunn, 1987). The researchers believe the amount of listening expected by the students should be reduced. Emphasis on shorter, intensive listening periods spaced throughout the school day with opportunities to listen to other children will benefit the students greatly (Rubin, 1990, Funk & Funk, 1989). According to Friedman (1986), being required to listen too often or too much causes many children who are not auditory learners to "tune out" and may eventually have a negative effect on their attitudes and the development of positive listening habits.

According to Armstrong (1997-98), students need to be taught strategies to become better listeners, to have their ears tuned for directions, and be ready to listen as soon as each new content area is being taught. Students may only listen to a portion of the directions given, or may need to adapt themselves to the different styles and methods of each teacher. Some teachers are

very clear on what information is necessary. They give lists, outlines, or diagrams on the blackboard as they talk. Other teachers unconsciously hide valuable information under a mass of details. Students must listen attentively to find important parts of information. Other strategies include taking notes, watching and anticipating the speaker's next point, making predictions, striving to understand, formulating questions, identifying and summarizing main ideas, and responding to what is heard (Jalongo, 1995 & Walker, 1998). By learning these skills students will be more disciplined and become active participants in group discussions. As stated by Armstrong (1997-98), listening takes will power and it requires actions that will train the mind to behave itself.

In conclusion, teachers and students both play a major role in solving the problem of inappropriate listening behaviors. Teachers would benefit greatly and become more knowledgeable about how to instruct students to become better listeners through effective staff development inservices. Inservices give teachers the chance to research problems and solutions and exchange prior experiences which may result in a better understanding of the problem. Also involved in solving the problem of inappropriate listening behaviors are the students themselves. Students need to increase their awareness of the definition of what a good listener is and what are good listening behaviors. When teachers and students work together to build student's listening skills, they are making an important contribution that will serve the student well, not only during early childhood but also throughout life (Jalongo, 1996).

Project Objectives and Processes

After researching the student's inability to listen actively and critically many causes were explored and possible solutions were investigated. As a result of increased instructional emphasis on strategies to increase active listening skills during the period of October 1998 through March 1999, the targeted fourth, fifth, sixth, and eighth grade students will show an improvement in critical listening.

In order to accomplish these outcomes, the following processes are necessary

A. Create an environment conducive to listening

1. Model appropriate listening habits and behaviors
2. Set up purposes for learning
3. Give concise and clear directions
4. Effectively teach active listening skills to students
5. Teach to the different learning styles
6. Limit time students are expected to listen

B. Expected student outcomes as a result of interventions

1. Exhibit physical behaviors of an active listener
2. Take notes based on oral presentations
3. Students display developed critical listening skills
   a. Recall and comprehend what is heard
   b. Apply and analyze information given
   c. Synthesize and evaluate
4. Transfer active listening to life
5. Academic performance increases

Project Action Plan

A. Baseline Activities
   1. Partner interviews
   2. Pair-Share analysis on interview for accuracy
   3. Student questionnaire
   4. Teacher checklist on listening behavior during interviews
   5. Staff Questionnaire
   6. Impromptu listening quiz on video, class discussion, or story
   7. Sentence dictation

B. Active listening skills
   1. Role playing active listening with journal entry
   2. Compare/contrast -- Whole class Venn diagram on active listening and non-active listening behaviors
   3. Rubric creation of what is active listening

C. Note-taking skills
   1. Direct instruction on note-taking
   2. Practice note-taking
      a. Lecture
      b. Video presentation
      c. Student oral presentations
   3. Story mapping -- All story elements

D. Critical listening skills
   1. Read information piece or story and ask knowledge/recall questions
   2. How To -- Expository paper -- Following directions
   3. Who Am I? -- Biography activity
   4. Guest Speakers with journal entry
   5. Field trip with journal entry

E. Life Transfer Skills
   1. Where Am I Activity

   2. Taking Phone Messages

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the interventions, after a six month period students will be regiven the listening baseline activities from October. The results of the pre- and post- activities will be compared for evidence of growth in listening. Teachers will be reviewing observation checklists, test scores, and anecdotal records. Student artifacts will be collected to help determine if the interventions were successful.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve listening skills in the classroom. Strategies for improving active listening included: appropriate teacher modeling and activities across all content areas designed to improve students' listening behaviors. A twenty week intervention was initiated in each of the two sites. Strategies were selected and implemented by the teacher researchers at age appropriate levels to meet the needs of each site.

The researchers at Sites A and B implemented baseline activities designed to assess listening abilities of students aged nine through fourteen. The first of these activities involved partner interviews in which students were required to ask a series of questions to each other. Teachers used an observational checklist to evaluate students' listening behaviors during the interviews. The observational checklist (Appendix E), included a total of ten listening behaviors for the researchers to observe for each student during the same activity. Three out of the four researchers at Sites A and B found this checklist to be overwhelming and extremely difficult.

The staff and students at Sites A and B were given a listening questionnaire. Staff questionnaires included personal and classroom related experiences involving listening.

Student questionnaires included self-evaluating questions pertaining to their own listening behaviors.

Other baseline activities included impromptu listening quizzes on videos, class discussions, and a series of stories. Students were also given weekly spelling dictation sentences based on approximately 20 words per week.

Initially, the researchers of Sites A and B assessed prior knowledge of the topic by means of student questionnaires (Appendix B), role-playing, and a T-chart comparing and contrasting good versus bad listening skills. During the role-playing activity, students were divided into two groups, story givers and story listeners. The story givers were instructed to relate a funny story to their partner. The story listeners were instructed to ignore the story givers. Reactions to being ignored were then discussed within the whole group. Some of the students' reactions ranged from being angry at being ignored to being upset at having to ignore others. The seventh and eighth grade instructor from Site A reported that her students became impatient with the activity because they predicted immediately as to the purpose of the activity. Based on this discussion, the researchers and their students compiled a list of "good" and "bad" listening behaviors (Appendix J), which then was transferred on to a poster reflecting good listening behaviors.

During the 20 week intervention, this poster was displayed prominently and referred to frequently throughout the school day. Researchers assisted students in developing positive listening behaviors through role play by focusing on one behavior at a time. Students were asked to reflect on and analyze their own strengths and weaknesses in regard to listening. Students were also asked to evaluate each others' performances in regard to appropriate listening behaviors. The reaction to this activity appeared to be a consensus of

agreement that most students have displayed inappropriate listening behaviors and that they were not aware of the inappropriateness of the behavior at the time.

Another intervention involved note taking skills. Previously during lectures, no direct instruction or purpose for listening was given. Students had been told to just take notes on what they thought was important. After this type of lecture, students seemed overwhelmed and/or confused by the task because they did not know what to write down. The researchers then proceeded to initiate direct instruction by setting purposes prior to the lecture. Additional instructional advice included writing down teacher-generated notes written on the board, use of graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams and T-charts, cloze activities, and mind mapping. Other organizational skills for students in fifth, seventh, and eighth grades included use of separate subject spiral notebooks for social studies, science, and math, etc. Students across all grade levels, fourth through eighth, seemed to feel more confident when purposes were set and instructional skills were given for their note taking.

Video presentations given originally did not include assessing prior knowledge or setting a purpose for watching the video. After the video, a set of questions (Appendix C) was given to the students to determine how well they listened. Students enjoyed the video because it was entertaining and a diversion from regular classroom work. During the intervention period, teachers set a purpose for listening, What you know, What you Want to learn, and What you learned (KWL) activities were presented, and questions were previewed.

A series of mini-mysteries (Appendix F) were read to the students by the teacher researchers. The first mystery did not include a review of the questions or any set purpose in advance. Most students were generally frustrated and frequently asked to have the story reread. Other reactions were a disbelief of the actual answers and the class

atmosphere was argumentative. A few students had excuses for not knowing answers; they couldn't listen and write at the same time, or they didn't hear that answer. After the first mystery, teacher researchers intentionally set purposes for listening, taught students how to take notes and listen at the same time, and eventually gave students the questions before the story was presented. Steps for note taking included listening for and writing down short key words or phases, using pictures, symbols or icons, and using mind maps or other graphic organizers. A discussion about unfamiliar vocabulary was also incorporated before listening to the story.

Since the beginning of October, students had sentences dictated to them as part of their weekly spelling tests. No direct instruction was given during this time period. Feedback included students telling other students to be quiet, closing the classroom door on their own initiative, and telling the teacher to slow down. Students were also observed physically preparing themselves to listen by their body language. For instance, their heads were closer to their papers, bodies were leaning towards the teacher, and fingers were gripped around their pen/pencil.

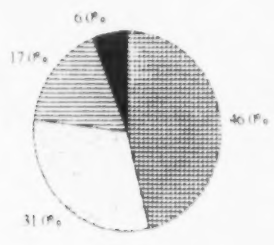
Another listening activity emphasized the importance of listening for directions. The class was divided into pairs sitting back to back. One student was given a picture (Appendix K), to describe to the other student. The other student couldn't look at the picture and had to draw the picture based on verbal directions only. A discussion was held afterward to highlight the importance of giving clear, concise directions. Many students felt this activity to be entertaining but challenging. Blame was placed on each other for either not giving good directions or not listening carefully to the directions given.

The fourth and fifth grade teacher researchers from Sites A and B had guest speakers give presentations. These presentations included a historical lecture and a

hands-on reptile awareness program. Students were asked to write reflective journal entries stating the new facts and ideas that were presented. These facts and ideas were then discussed and expanded upon. Due to the entertaining nature of the presentations, students were highly motivated to participate, which was reflected in positive listening behaviors.

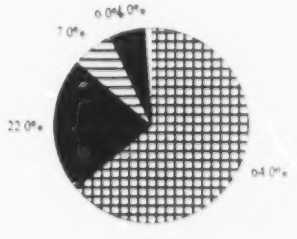
Presentation and Analysis of Results

After applying listening skills interventions to fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth grades of Site A and B, researchers have compiled data comparing results before and after the interventions. "The Amazing World of Animals" post-video and corresponding questions (Appendix H) were given. The results appear in Figure 6 below. The interventions appear to have had a positive effect on students' listening skills watching a video.



Pre-test
Amazing World of Animals Video

XXX	=	Score of 100%
Gray	=	Score of 92%
≡≡≡	=	Score of 83%
Black	=	Score of 75%



Post-test
Amazing World of Animals Video*

XXX	=	Score of 100%
Grey	=	Score of 92%
≡≡≡	=	Score of 83%
Black	=	Score of 75%
White	=	Score of 67%

Figure 6. Listening Assesement. Comparing Pre- and Post- videos.

Eighteen percent more students received a score of 100%, 9% fewer students received a score of 92%, 10% fewer students received a score of 83%, an equal amount of students

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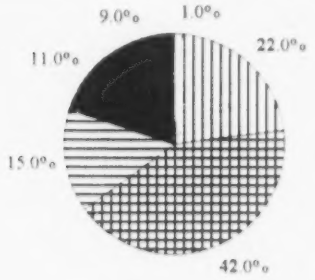
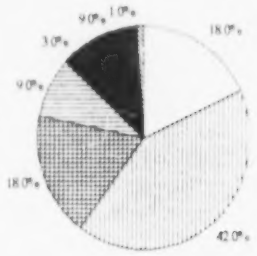
received a score of 75%, and 1% of students received a score of 67% compared to 0% on the baseline activity. Due to student transfers, the total amount of students participating decreased from the original 72 to 70.

In comparing the results from the pre- and post- "Were You Listening Activity" stories and questions (Appendices G and I), researchers from Sites A and B found an appreciable increase in overall listening performances.



Pre-test
Were You Listening Activity

White	=	Score of 100%
||||||||	=	Score of 80%
####	=	Score of 60%
====	=	Score of 40%
Black	=	Score of 20%
Gray	=	Score of 0%



Post-test
Were You Listening Activity

White	=	Score of 100%
||||||||||	=	Score of 86%
XXXX	=	Score of 71%
=====	=	Score of 57%
Black	=	Score of 43%
Gray	=	Score of 29%
\\\\\\\\	=	Score of 14%

Figure 7. Listening assessment.

Researchers noted that 79% of students passed (70% or greater) on the Post-test assessment compared to 24% of students who passed the Pre-test assessment. Percentages reflected in the graphs for the assessments are not parallel because the Pre-test contained five questions, while the Post-test contained seven. Due to student transfers, the total amount of students participating decreased from the original 72 to 71.

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The results of the Spelling dictation interventions revealed the most dramatic increase in listening skill assessment as evidenced by Figure 8.

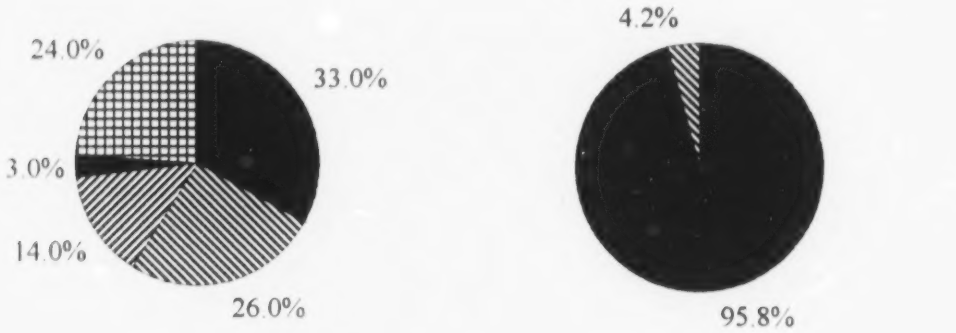

Figure 8. Sentence dictation recall.

Following the interventions, 62.8% more students received a grade of A, 21.8% fewer students received a grade of B, and no students received a grade of C, D, or F. Due to student transfers, the total amount of students participating decreased from 72 to 71.

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Table 2

Student Listening Definitions

Definitions	Number of Times Recorded (Pre-Interventions)	(Post-Interventions)
Pays Attention	14	15
Looks at the speaker and nods their head that they understand	11	16
Doesn't talk or interrupt	9	9
Used "Listen" as part of their definition	8	15
Good grades, Good in school*	7	3
Takes time to listen to others	7	1
Follows directions	6	1
Hears very well	4	0
Not distracted; Doesn't play with toys	3	4
Understands/Remembers what is said	2	4
Asks Questions	1	0
Takes Notes	0	1
No Response	0	2

*Note This comment was not checked by any students questioned at Site B. Site B is a non-graded district.

The Pre- and Post Student Listening Definition, from the student questionnaire (Appendix B), revealed similar responses from both surveys. Nineteen percent of the students surveyed on the pre-questionnaire gave "Paying Attention" as their definition most often, compared to 21% on the post-questionnaire. One interesting observation was that ten percent more students used the word "Listening" as part of their definition, which was surprising to the researchers from Site A. The researcher from Site B had instructed her students not to use the word "Listen" as part of their definition, while researchers from Site A had not given any specific directive. Another observation of interest was the fact that none of the students defined listening as "hearing" on the post-questionnaire.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on improving listening skills, the students showed a marked improvement in effective listening behaviors as increased by increased scores on tests and quizzes, teacher observations, and anecdotal records. Teachers/researchers observed behaviors that showed an improvement in student attitude towards listening and a greater awareness of the importance of listening.

Teacher/researchers at Sites A and B have concluded that changes in student listening behaviors have to be initiated by the teacher. The first step was to identify for the students attributes of a good listener and display examples of positive listening behaviors. It is important for the teacher to model appropriate listening behaviors in order for the students to have a positive pattern from which to copy. Teachers need to practice what they preach in order for students to realize the importance and sincerity of the lesson being presented.

Teacher/researchers also concur that setting a purpose(s) for lessons will improve listening skills and academic performance across the curriculum. When purposes were stated clearly before the lesson, students were more attentive, performed better and exhibited more confidence in their abilities.

Changes in student listening behaviors are affected directly by teacher interventions, and by students becoming more aware of the qualities of what makes a good listener. Students also took an active interest in improving their listening behaviors as evidenced throughout the intervention process.

Student awareness and confidence in analyzing their own listening abilities was developed through use of a student-generated listening poster. Students were more involved in defining listening and therefore took ownership of their own learning. During the video and story activities, students improved because of prior knowledge being assessed, purposes being set, and questions being previewed.

Improvement on the spelling dictation tests was due to a number of factors. Teachers modified their sentence dictation by slowing down to a chunk of four to six words at a time, giving wait time between chunks, and varying voice inflections. Improvements in dictation results can also be attributed to changes in student behaviors while taking the test. Changes observed included students following the rules listed on the listening posters (Appendix J), and taking the initiative to improve the listening atmosphere of the classroom.

For the most part, the researchers felt that all interventions were positive with the exception of one. The researchers recommend that the observational checklist (Appendix E), be limited for future use in the classroom. Researchers found that observing nine behaviors of the entire class at one time was too difficult to manage. For future use the

researchers suggest that either the number of students or the amount of behaviors being observed be decreased in order to effectively manage a quality observation. The seventh and eighth grade instructor at Site A had no difficulty managing the observational checklist because of the small number of students being observed. Only six students were being observed compared to an average of 22 students for the other three classes.

One of the concerns researchers have is the transfer of effective listening behaviors. Will students be able to transfer effective listening behaviors to other classes at this time, other classes in the future, and life in general? While students appear to succeed with their present instructors, future success is not guaranteed unless an appropriate listening environment is established by other instructors.

The teacher/researchers felt that this listening project was a positive experience. Both researchers and students benefited from listening strategies gained through interventions. Our listening interventions dramatically changed our approach to teaching. Teacher/researchers have found that when clear specific purposes are set, students are able to meet these expectations and are successful. Listening is a major communication skill that needs to be addressed and incorporated throughout the curriculum. Knowledge of listening skills cannot be assumed, but needs to be approached directly, frequently, and with a clear focus of desired objectives. If more teachers involve themselves with improving listening skills in their classrooms, listening may no longer be known as the orphan of education.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Name _____ Grade Level _____

School _____ Date _____

Listening Skills
Teacher Questionaire

1. Do you find poor listening skills prevalent in your classroom? Yes No

2. Do you find poor listening skills affecting academic progress? Yes No

3. Were you taught how to be a good listener? Yes No

4. Do you directly teach listening skills? Yes No

5. Do your students listen to each other? Yes No

6. Please check the strategies you initiate in your classroom

- ☐ Students are asked to answer questions about a story orally.
- ☐ Students are asked to paraphrase or summarize spoken messages.
- ☐ Students are asked to carry out a series of oral directions.
- ☐ Students are asked to take notes on oral presentations, i.e. videos, lectures, student projects.
- ☐ Teacher sets specific purposes for note taking before oral presentations, i.e. videos, lectures, student projects.
- ☐ Students play games designed to use listening skills. What games do you use?

_____

_____

_____

7. What is your definition of a "good listener"? _____

_____

_____

Name_____(optional) Date _____

Student Questionaire

1 What is a "good" listener?_____

_____

2. Do you think being a good listener helps you in school? Yes No

3. Are you a "good" listener? Yes No

4. Do you like to listen to other people? Yes No

5. Do you start talking before the other person is finished? Yes No

6. Do people listen to you? Yes No

7 Where do you listen better? Home School

8. Put a check in the boxes which you do

- ❑ Look at the person who is speaking
- ❑ Do other things when people are speaking, like drawing, playing with something in your desk, daydream
- ❑ Talk to others when directions are being given
- ❑ Ask questions when you don't understand what has been said
- ❑ Retell a story that has been read to you
- ❑ Listen to all directions before you pick up your pencil

9 How would you teach someone to be a good listener?_____

_____

Amazing World of Animals

1) Name three animals the video mentioned.

_____ _____ _____

2) Tell one way in which animals are like teachers.

_____

3) Match each animal with its natural ability.

_____ dog	a) can run extremely fast
_____ cat	b) keen sense of eyesight in the dark
_____ bird	c) has a built in compass for directions
_____ cheetah	d) keen sense of smell
_____ dolphin	e) excellent swimmer

4) Explain how animals communicate.

_____

_____

5) Compare and contrast animal parents to human parents

Alike	Different
a)	a)
b)	b)
c)	c)

6) Imagine that you are an animal. What would you be? Where would you live? How would you protect yourself? What would you teach your young?

_____

_____

_____

Draw, color, and label your picture.

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Directions for teacher (Give half the students the interview sheet at a time. Tell the students (interviewer) to read the question only once and the interviewee to say the answer only once.

Interviewed by:

_____

1. Your favorite color is _____

2. Your favorite animal is _____

3. Number of people living in your house_____

4. When is your birthday?_____

5. What is your address?_____

6. Name of your favorite television show?_____

7. What is your favorite food?_____

8. The name of the last movie you saw_____

9. The name of the last book you read_____

10. A really good weekend to you is _____

_____

11. Your most prized possessions are _____

12. Your personal heroes are_____

Directions for teacher (Give half the students the interview sheet at a time. Tell the students (interviewer) to read the question only once and the interviewee to say the answer only once.

Interviewed by:

_____

1. Number of people living in your house_____

2. Your favorite animal is _____

3. What is your address?_____

4. Your most prized possessions are _____

5. The name of the last movie you saw_____

6. Name of your favorite television show?_____

7. Your personal heroes are_____

8. Your favorite color is _____

9. The name of the last book you read_____

10. A really good weekend to you is _____

_____

11. When is your birthday?_____

12. What is your favorite food?_____

Interview Checklist : Name	Looks at partner	Stays on-task	Answers promptly
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
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20			
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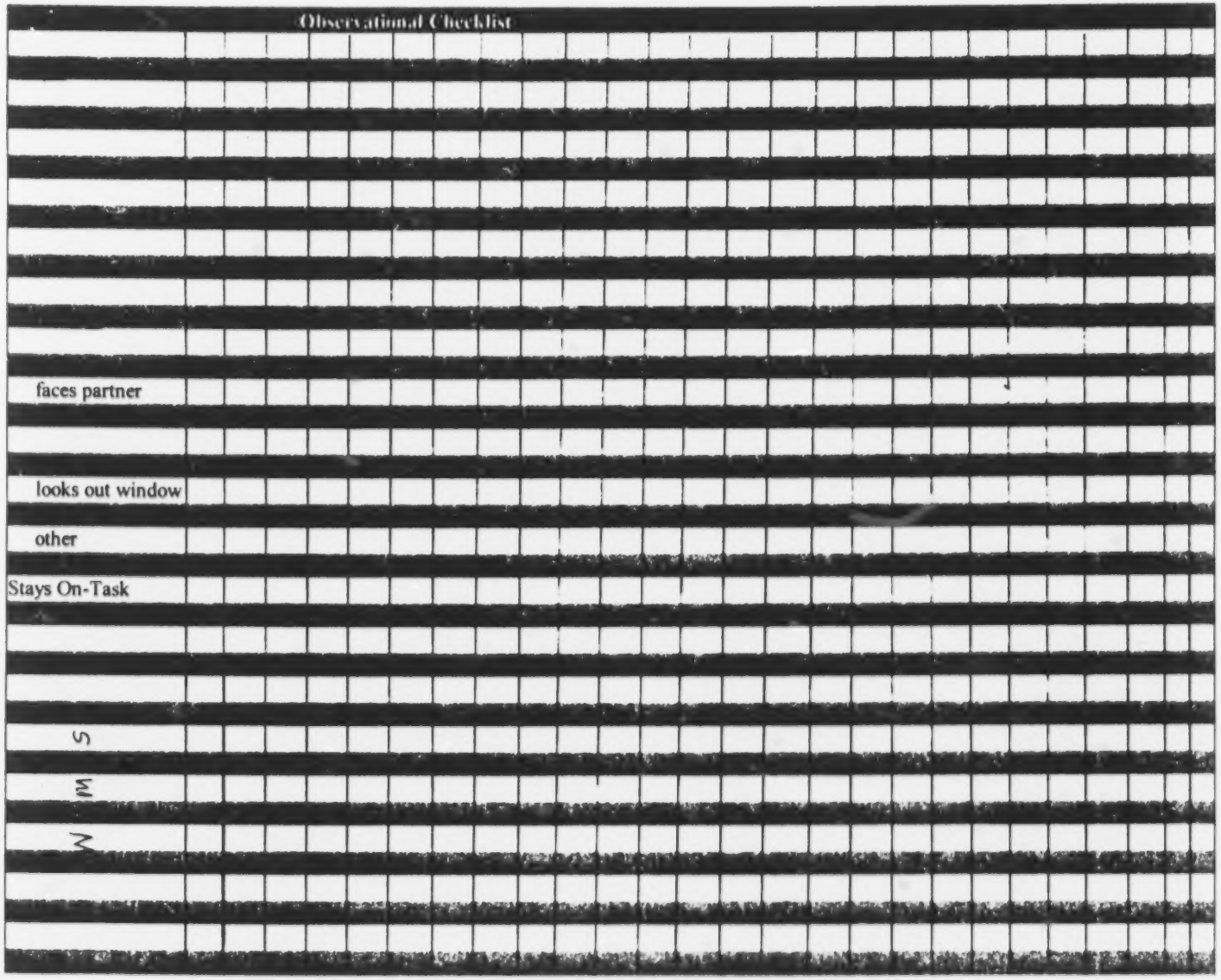
22.			
23.			
24.			
25.			
26.			



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Story #1

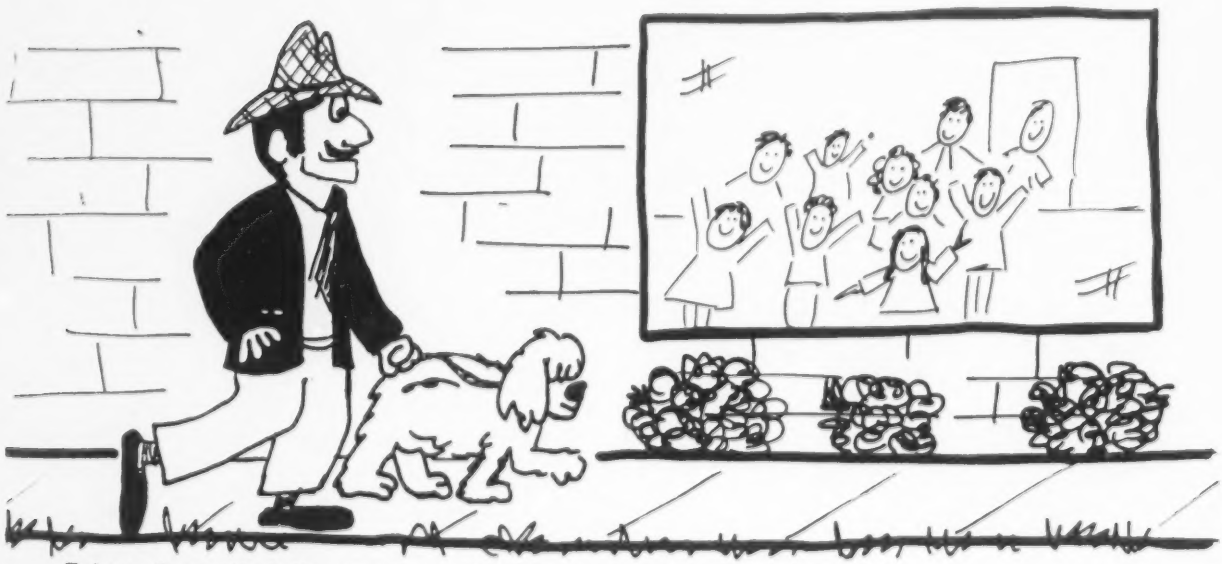
The Case of the Missing Girl

Watson's barks could be heard by all the students in Mr. Larson's math class. "Look," they cried. "There's Sam Sherlock and Watson, his dog," they shouted, as they looked out of the big window facing the street.

"Welcome, Sam and Watson," said Mr. Larson as he opened the door. "I certainly hope you can help us. As I told you when I called, one of our girls, Sue, did not come back from lunch, and we are very worried. I called you before I did anything else."

"Let's go look around the school," Sam said. "Come on, Watson. Maybe you can help." Watson smelled the girl's sweater. Then he ran out and put his nose to the ground. He sniffed and sniffed. He ran this way and that. Suddenly, he put his nose in the air, sniffed once more and ran to the equipment box on the field.

Who do you suppose was sleeping in the box?



Taken from Mini Mysteries. Remedia Publication, 1984.

Story #1

WERE YOU LISTENING??

Questions: THE CASE OF THE MISSING GIRL

1. *Who do you suppose was sleeping in the box?* _____

2. *How did Watson know where to look?* _____

3. *How do dogs find some things? What can dogs do better than humans?* _____

4. *Do the police use dogs to find things for them?* _____

5. *Who called Sam to help him?* _____

6. *What class were the children in?* _____

7. *Have you ever had someone worry about you because they couldn't find you? What happened?* _____

8. *Have you ever fallen asleep when you were hiding somewhere? What happened?* _____

9. *Some missing children stories are not solved as quickly as this one. List some rules children should follow to be safe.* _____

10. *Who solved this case?* _____

Taken from Mini Mysteries. Remedia publication, 1984.

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Spelling Dictation Sentences

Site A - 7th/8th Grade

Pre-test Sentences
1. Continuous usage of your creative powers is good insurance against boredom.
2. The television narrative on survival in the forest was very believable.

Post-test Sentences
1. There is no justice if I have to pledge to wear these juvenile pajamas and jacket.
2. Terry will rejoice if she gets a badge in language arts and wins the dodge ball game.

Site A - 5th Grade

Pre-test Sentences
1. The adorable doll was lovable and movable, but breakable.
2. The baby-sitter was dependable, likable, and available for a reasonable fee.

Post-test Sentences
1. Please schedule the orchestra leader to talk to the school.
2. It is hard to find words that rhyme with rhinoceros.

Site A - 4th Grade

Pre-test Sentences
1. We will have great weather in the summer months ahead.
2. I believe the cashier will weigh the fruit for us.

Post-test sentences
1. Our chances of two circuses coming to town are good.
2. Mom went to a lecture on furniture of the future.

Site B - 4th Grade

Pre-test Sentences
1. We will have great weather in the summer months ahead.
2. I believe the cashier will weigh the fruit for us.

Post-test sentences
1. Our chances of two circuses coming to town are good.
2. Mom went to a lecture on furniture of the future.

Changing Times and Minds

1) Name five things you should do in order to take care of a pet properly

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

2) What is the Golden Rule?

_____

3) Match each animal with its job or use in the past.

_____ oxen	a) pulled heavy machinery for crops
_____ buffalo	b) carried messages in World War II
_____ pigeons	c) used for transporting mail
_____ horses	d) used for clothes and tents

4) Explain why the mother cat went into the burning house to save her kittens

_____

_____

5) Compare and contrast animal feelings to human feelings

Alike	Different
a)	a)
b)	b)
c)	c)

6) Life is precious. Predict what the world would be like without animals. How would you feel? What might you do about saving the animal population?

_____

_____

_____

7) How did the monkey with the bad leg survive?

_____

8) Imagine you knew someone that was different. (kind of like the monkey with the bad leg) How would you help that person get along?

_____

_____

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Story #15

The Case of the Phony Painting

Watson, Sam Sherlock's dog, was running behind him. Watson wanted to play because Sam had not taken him for a walk in the park for a long time. The sun was shining, birds were chirping, and children were everywhere. Artists were showing their paintings. There were many different booths set up, so people passing by could see all the things that were for sale.

Sam said, "This way, Watson. Let's take a look at these. The sign says that these paintings are one hundred years old."

Mr. Wright, the art dealer, was saying to the people that were looking at the paintings, "I do not paint myself. I collect great art. These were just found in an attic. They are one hundred years old. This one was painted before we even had electricity."

Sam looked carefully at the painting. The colors were nice. The picture was of a kitchen with a family sitting around the table. On a small table in a corner of the room, Sam could see a toaster. "Better not buy that painting," Sam said. "It's a phony."

How did Sam know?

Taken from Mini Mysteries. Remedia Publications, 1984.

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Story #15

WERE YOU LISTENING??

Questions: THE CASE OF THE PHONY PAINTING

1. *How did Sam know the painting was a phony?* _____

2. *Where does this story take place?* _____

3. *What kind of a day was it?* _____

4. *What did the art dealer say to the people who were looking at the paintings?*

5. *What room was painted by the artist whose painting the dealer was showing?*

6. *Was the art dealer the only person with a booth in the area?* _____

7. *Was the art dealer dishonest? Does the story tell whether he bought the painting?*

8. *Is the art dealer's name given in the story?* _____

9. *What things that are in a kitchen work by electricity?* _____

10. *Name two things that could have been on a kitchen table a hundred years ago.*

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Taken from Mini Mysteries. Remedia Publications, 1984.

LISTENING RULES
Room 208 Fifth Grade

- Face The Speaker
- Sit up Straight
- Keep Hands on Desk
- Picture Story (In Your Mind)
- Ask Questions
- Be Quiet
- Keep Desks Cleared
- Make Predictions
- Take Notes
- Pay Attention (Don't Interrupt; Listen Courteously)

LISTENING RULES
Room 204 Fourth Grade

- Look at the speaker
- Keep hands off things in desk and on desk
- Wait to make a comment until speaker is finished
- Ask questions
- Nod your head

Listening Rules

- Look at the speaker.
- Be polite. Do not interrupt the speaker.
- Show the speaker that you are interested with body language.
- Listen critically. Ask yourself if what the speaker is stating is clear and makes sense.
- Ask questions if you don't understand.

Active Listening Strategies In Room 103

- Look at person who's talking
- Pay attention / Agree - Disagree
- Don't play with objects - distractions (sleep, leave room, desk, window)
- Don't talk when other person is talking
- Give comments to person who's talking (i.e. drive - through at McDonalds) Repeat
- Note taking
- Don't interrupt (cut off)
- Be polite
- Hear the directions
- Explain / clarify / ask questions
- Understand / Comprehend
- Help each other

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